Cambridge Assessment International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

FIRST LANGUAGE ENGLISH **0500/22**

Paper 2 Directed Writing and Composition **May/June 2021**

INSERT **2 hours**

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INFORMATION

- This insert contains the reading texts.
- You may annotate this insert and use the blank spaces for planning. **Do not write your answers** on the insert.

This document has **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

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Read **both** texts, and then answer **Question 1** on the question paper.

Text A: My best friendships happen online but that doesn't make them any less valid

The following text is about online friendships.

We blame the internet for all human sins. It has grown popular to berate the internet for its role in our ever-growing loneliness epidemic.

Scientists regularly release studies that suggest a correlation between social media use and loneliness, low self-esteem and social isolation. But even they have to admit we do not know what came first: the loneliness or the social media.

I'd like to defend the internet. I've just spent a year researching friendship for my book, which is about precisely this: the intersection between loneliness and friendship.

I've spoken to countless people, both my own friends and strangers from the internet, who would simply not have access to the same social life without social media. I know a woman who met all three of her bridesmaids – the women she cherishes most in the world – online. She says she feels like her most authentic self when she's online.

This is perhaps exactly the point: we can no longer quite so easily distinguish between our online selves and our 'real' selves. We are becoming confident enough to merge our online and offline selves as we realise that social media is an important platform for friendship.

My best friends in the world live in Melbourne, New York, Los Angeles and New Orleans. I am, at any time, a minimum of 5 000 kilometres away from them. Catch-ups over lunch are not possible for us. Our group chat has become a glorious mishmash of the trivial and the meaningful – home to career advice, dog pictures, memes and moral support. I am indignant and distressed by anyone who would suggest our largely online friendship is in any way less valid than people who have the luxury of sharing oxygen in the same physical place.

Besides, befriending apps are popping up all over. Some alleviate the loneliness for new mums or help you find new friends when you move to a new city. The clever thing about so many of these apps is they use the very thing we blame for our disconnection from others – technology – to bring us back together. They take away the difficulty of usual social interaction and reduce the chance of rejection. Think how many people this technology might particularly help: introverts, people with disabilities that make it difficult to leave the house or even speak, deaf people, people with mental health problems, people who just find social interaction terrifying.

The internet could be just the thing to help us revive friendship.

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Text B: The limits of friendship

The following text is about the changing nature of friendship.

Robin Dunbar, an anthropologist working with primates some years ago, was researching why primates spend so much time in groups.

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Putting in the effort to 'like', comment and interact with an ever-widening network means we have less time and capacity left for our closer friends – the ones that really matter.

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